

## *Sue W. Kelly*

*1936–*

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
REPUBLICAN FROM NEW YORK

*1995–*



Image courtesy of the Member

**A SMALL-BUSINESS OWNER, TEACHER, AND HEALTHCARE ADVOCATE,** Sue Kelly won election to the House in 1994. As chair of a Financial Services subcommittee, she has investigated corporate scandals and terrorist financing. During her tenure in Congress, Representative Kelly also has been a leading proponent of women's health legislation.

Congresswoman Kelly was born in Lima, Ohio, on September 26, 1936. She graduated from Lima's Central High School in 1954 and earned a B.A. in botany and bacteriology from Denison University in Granville, Ohio, four years later. In 1960 she married Ed Kelly, settling in suburban New York, and they raised four children. Sue Kelly earned an M.A. in health advocacy from Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, in 1985. Kelly first participated in elective politics by working on several campaigns; this experience included a position as adviser and campaign manager for New York Congressman Hamilton Fish, Sr., who represented the southern Hudson Valley, where Kelly lives.

When Fish announced his retirement, Kelly entered the race for the open House seat that spanned much of the lower Hudson Valley, from Poughkeepsie in the north to Westchester County in the south. The diverse district included computer corporations, dairy-based agriculture, and the army's U.S. Military Academy and had been represented by a Fish family member since the 1920s—one of the longer political dynasties in congressional history.<sup>1</sup> Kelly fended off a field of more-conservative candidates in the GOP primary and, in the general election, defeated Democrat Hamilton Fish, Jr., son of the retiring Congressman, by 14 percentage points in a race that included a third-party candidate, former U.S. Representative Joseph DioGuardi. In 1996, she won re-election with 42 percent of the vote, again in a three-way race, topping her closest competitor, Democrat Richard Klein, by seven percentage points.<sup>2</sup> In the subsequent four re-election campaigns, Kelly earned 60 percent of the vote or greater, aided by redistricting after the 2000 Census. In 2004, she won election to her sixth consecutive term by 67 percent of the vote.<sup>3</sup>

When she took her seat in the 104th Congress (1995–1997), Representative Kelly received assignments on three committees: Banking and Financial Services (later renamed Financial Services), Transportation and Infrastructure, and Small Business. She has remained on each panel throughout her House career. By the 107th Congress (2001–2003), she had risen to chair the Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. She held that position in the 108th and 109th Congresses (2003–2007), by which time she also served as the third-ranking Member on the Small Business Committee.

From her seat on the Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Kelly has focused on corporate accountability and tracking terrorist financing. Her subcommittee conducted the first congressional hearings on the Enron and Global Crossing bankruptcies as well as the WorldCom accounting fraud. She contributed to and cosponsored the Sarbanes–Oxley Corporate Reform Bill, which aimed at stricter corporate accountability. In 2004, Kelly founded the Congressional Anti-Terrorist Financing Task Force, to better combat the financiers of terrorism and to examine federal programs already in place to break apart money laundering networks. She also has been an advocate of legislation to prevent identity theft and supported related provisions in the 2003 Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act.<sup>4</sup>

Congresswoman Kelly's seat on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has helped her steer federal dollars into her district for infrastructure projects and community organizations. She co-authored the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21) in 1998, which brought more than \$11 billion to New York for transit and highway improvements. She has procured millions of dollars for Stewart International Airport, including funds to design and construct a new air traffic control tower. Kelly has sought to pass legislation to protect the environment in the Hudson Valley, including the Hudson River Habitat Restoration Act and a bill that set aside a large tract of land, the Sterling Forest, near Tuxedo, New York.

Kelly also has taken a legislative interest in women's health issues. A supporter of abortion rights, she has backed legislation for cancer research and the prevention of domestic violence. She was the chief House sponsor of the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998, which requires health insurance companies to provide women reconstructive surgery after a mastectomy. In the 106th Congress (1999–2001), she served as the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues.

#### FOR FURTHER READING

*Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress*, "Sue W. Kelly,"  
<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

#### NOTES

- 1 James Feron, "In the 19th, A Family Seat Vs. First Woman," 18 September 1994, *New York Times*: 13 WC.
- 2 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html>.
- 3 *Politics in America*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003): 718.
- 4 "Official Biography of Sue Kelly," <http://suekelly.house.gov/Biography.asp> (accessed 2 December 2004).